

POLICIES AND STANDARDS

Non-Intensive Family Preservation Programs

I. Standards for Program Development and Design:

A. Key Design Elements

- Services are targeted to families with children at risk for current or future role dysfunction in home or community, due to a variety of socio-cultural, physical, psychological, and academic factors;
- Services are time limited - provided for a maximum of six months;
- Services are home-based - at least one-half of a caseworker's time spent providing family preservation services to a family is spent in face to face contact in the family's home and community;
- Services focus on promoting family competence and stability - building on strengths and the family's own resources;
- Services are provided in a culturally competent manner with understanding of and respect for cultural and ethnic diversity;
- The services provided are both therapeutic and concrete;
- All Family Preservation Services clients have access to crisis/emergency services 24 hours a day, seven days a week;
- Caseloads range from two to eight families at a time, based on the intensity and duration of services and the severity of the problems, as recommended by caseworker and approved by supervisor;
- Family preservation caseworkers have specialized training and support to provide this service.

B. Eligibility

Families eligible for family preservation are those with one or more children ages birth through 17 years who are at risk for

current or future role dysfunction that could lead to out-of-home placement. Risk factors include, but are not limited to, the following:

- lack of effective parenting
- family disruption/instability
- substance abuse
- abuse/neglect
- behavioral difficulties
- court/law enforcement involvement
- low income
- academic/truancy problems
- developmental disabilities
- intergenerational difficulties
- mental/emotional problems
- family violence
- teen pregnancy
- health problems

Reunification services are provided to families who have one or more children returning from an out-of-home placement. The populations of children for whom this service shall be made available include those alleged or found to be abused, neglected or dependent, emotionally or behaviorally disturbed; undisciplined or delinquent; and/or have medical needs, that with assistance, could be managed in the home.

C. Services

Family Preservation programs are required to provide the following services:

- Family assessment
- Family and individual counseling
- Client advocacy
- Case management/Referral to other services as appropriate
- Development and enhancement of parenting skills

Optional services include:

- Concrete services

The required services are defined and described as follows:

Family assessment

Family assessment (North Carolina Family Assessment Scale) is an ongoing process which continues from intake through termination of services. The purpose of the family assessment is:

- to identify the family's strengths, resources, needs, and weaknesses;
- to help family members identify measurable, realistic, achievable, and time-limited treatment goals; and
- to help family members develop strategies for achieving their goals.

The family assessment is comprehensive and considers the family's strengths as well as needs within its entire social context (i.e. nuclear family, extended family, school, work, church, neighborhood, etc.). Family assessment information is gathered through:

- ongoing observation of family members in their natural environment;
- family and individual meetings;
- a social history gathered over time through interactions with family members;
- reports from other professionals; and
- assessment instruments completed by/with family members.

Specialized assessments are considered on a case-by-case basis. These may include referrals for neurological, nutritional, speech and language, developmental, offender, and psychological assessments; alcohol, drug, and toxic metal screening, blood chemistry and vocational evaluations, etc.

Family and individual counseling

Counseling in this context means the therapeutic interaction between Family Preservation Services caseworkers and family members focused on problem-solving and skill-building. Counseling services may include individual, couple, family, and group counseling. During counseling, the worker and family members:

- establish a trusting relationship;
- define and clarify family issues and perceptions;
- assess the need for change and develop and implement strategies for making those changes;

- evaluate progress and make appropriate changes in strategies and goals; and
- effectively terminate the relationship.

Client advocacy

This means providing the family with information about the services available to them in their community and helping the family to obtain them. The Family Preservation Services caseworker initially intervenes with other service providers as needed on behalf of the family and models advocacy skills for the family. The Family Preservation Services worker also helps the family to develop the skills needed to negotiate with bureaucracies and services systems to obtain needed help.

Case management

Case management in this context means that the Family Preservation Services caseworker takes responsibility for assuring that the needs of the family as a whole are assessed, that service plans are created with the family and reflect their priorities and goals, and that the efforts of all service providers involved with the family are coordinated and consistent with the service plan. The goals of family-centered case management are:

- to develop joint service plans which delineate the roles and functions of all agencies involved with the family;
- to ensure that the efforts of all agencies are directed toward common goals;
- to ensure that methods and techniques of various service providers do not conflict or confuse family members; and
- to ensure assessment of a family's need for follow-up services, and to plan with appropriate agencies for follow-up services to be provided.

The worker provides family members with information on the array of useful community resources and helps the family access necessary services. The family makes its own decisions about which services it will use and participates in meetings with service providers.

Development and enhancement of parenting skills

Through the assessment, counseling, and case management processes, parenting skill deficits will be identified. The worker offers instruction in these skills and provides support as parents implement newly learned skills. This involves a wide range of parenting activities and functions such as

nurturing, age appropriate expectations, adequate supervision, acceptable discipline, behavior management, communication, anger control, child development education, etc.

Concrete services

Beyond these required services, it is expected that local Family Preservation Services programs will provide or help families obtain a broad range of therapeutic, supportive and concrete services to address the particular objectives in the families' own treatment plans. Concrete services are not required, but may be necessary and are often effective in Family Preservation Services interventions. Concrete services are tangible services provided by the Family Preservation Services worker or agency. Some examples are financial assistance, household chores or repairs, and transportation.

D. Intervention Strategies

Family Preservation Services caseworkers are expected to possess a wide range of skills and abilities in crisis intervention, assessment, counseling/therapy, communication, and teaching. They must be flexible, sensitive to multi-cultural differences and able to work effectively with families of diverse backgrounds. With these skills and abilities they must draw from an extensive repertoire of specific strategies and techniques to meet the diverse needs of diverse families. Among the intervention strategies utilized in family preservation services are:

- Defusing, engaging and confronting clients
- Family assessment and goal setting
- Developing service plans and contracts with families
- Teaching behavior management, problem solving and communication skills
- Teaching anger management
- Teaching assertiveness skills to families
- Teaching parenting skills
- Child development education
- Developing individualized plans and techniques with families to help manage addiction, depression or violence among family members

- The use of networking and effective referrals to on-going services

II. Standards for Program Operation and Service Delivery

A. Criteria for Referral/Acceptance for Family Preservation Services

Family Preservation Services are directed to families with one or more children ages birth through 17 years who are at risk for current or future role dysfunction as defined in Section I.B. Eligibility for services must be certified through documentation of the following referral/acceptance criteria.

- Alternative, less intensive intervention strategies have been tried without success or considered but determined to be inappropriate or unavailable to the child and family, thus the needs of the child and family are beyond the resources of the current service provider.
- With family preservation services, it is believed to be safe for the child(ren), the family, the Family Preservation Services caseworker and the community for the child(ren) to remain in the home.
- The referent must have discussed Family Preservation Services with the family and at least one parent or other primary care giver indicates that she or he is willing and able to participate in Family Preservation Services.

B. Referral Sources

Appropriate sources of referral are county departments of social services, area MH/DD/SAS programs, juvenile court services, schools, and other community agencies. Self-referrals are also accepted. If families who have previously received Family Preservation Services wish to refer other families to the program, efforts will be made to promote self-referral by encouraging them to have potential clients contact the program directly.

C. Response to Referrals

There must be a response within three days to referrals for Family Preservation Services. It is suggested that the referent will be contacted within two working days with information regarding the capability to respond to referral. If the family cannot be served immediately, they may be placed on a waiting list if appropriate. An initial contact (telephone or face-to-face) must be attempted within three working days.

If contact has not been made within four working days, the referent must be informed of this and can take action accordingly.

D. Caseload and Length of Service

Caseloads range from two to eight families at a time, based on the intensity and duration of services and the severity of the problems, as recommended by caseworker and approved by supervisor. Family Preservation programs range in models from early intervention to reunification, thus intensity and duration of services vary. Initial contacts with a family will be more frequent; intensity of service will decrease as the family becomes more self-sufficient. Families can be served for up to six months. This standard was set to allow flexibility in response to individual family service needs while at the same time endorsing the principles of a time limited intervention model that takes advantage of the discomfort and disequilibrium that occurs in a crisis to generate positive changes within a family. It means that planning for termination of the service is incorporated in the treatment plan and goal setting with the family from the beginning.

Following termination of service, the Family Preservation Services caseworker may need to be available to the family for brief interventions - "booster shots" - if there is an issue related to the work that was accomplished during the original intervention. These types of contacts are typically initiated by the family and serve to reinforce learning or progress that has been made.

E. Staff Qualifications

Each Family Preservation Services program must have written policies that address the educational and experience qualifications for Family Preservation Services caseworkers and supervisors. Caseworkers must have a Bachelor's degree in human services or a related field, or a Bachelor's degree and a minimum of two years experience in human services. It is recommended that Family Preservation Services supervisors have a Master's degree in human services and/or three years of related experience. Each program will assure that staff have the body of knowledge, competence and practice skills required to effectively provide family preservation services. Each program should have a written plan for orientation, family-centered training and on-going staff development.

F. Supervision and Support

Family Preservation Services Supervisors are expected to:

- provide on-the-job training and coaching to newly employed Family Preservation Services caseworkers in addition to, formal training that may be provided by the agency;
- provide back-up for Family Preservation Services caseworkers;
- attend initial family screenings with Family Preservation Services caseworkers as needed;
- provide at least one hour per week of individual consultation to Family Preservation Services caseworkers; and
- be the primary supervisor available for consultation 24 hours per day, seven days a week, and make arrangements with another supervisor knowledgeable in Family Preservation Services when unavailable.

In order to provide the level of supervision and support necessary for Family Preservation Services, it is recommended that programs maintain a maximum supervisor to staff ratio of 1:10. For larger programs, group supervision is recommended to augment individual time.

III. Criteria for Funding

A. Each program must:

- comply with standards established for the state Family Preservation Services Program through legislation and policies of the Department of Human Resources;
- employ staff who demonstrate the skills and competencies required to provide or supervise family preservation services;
- demonstrate that they have appropriate linkages with community agencies to enable them to help clients obtain and use services and resources they need and want, and to make effective referrals for follow-up when Family Preservation Service is terminated;
- be able to show through submission of an annual operating budget that, with the grant, they have adequate fiscal and other resources to provide a viable Family Preservation

Services program;

- conduct a needs assessment utilizing various sources of data to demonstrate a need for such a program in the community;
- submit with their application an inter-agency agreement among, at a minimum, the county department of social services, the area MH/DD/SAS program and the Court Counselor staff serving the proposed service area, that specifically addresses how families will be referred for Family Preservation Services and what follow-up will occur during services and after termination; and
- be willing to provide data and participate in state program evaluation activities as requested by DHR.

- B. Grants may be awarded to stabilize or expand existing locally based public or private Family Preservation Services programs or to enable public or private agencies to develop and implement new model Family Preservation Services programs.
- C. Programs will be expected to make reasonable efforts to maximize funding from other resources.
- D. Programs may be eligible to receive a grant as long as monitoring and evaluation results indicate that their services are effective and the programs are operating in compliance with funding criteria.